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Leaders from Judiciary, Bureaucracy, Taxation Interact with Sadhguru on Rebuilding the Nation

7 June 2020, Coimbatore: There is tremendous opportunity for the country to attract large investments in the next 3-5 years by acting swiftly in framing more business friendly policies, said Sadhguru, Founder, Isha Foundation speaking in a webinar titled 'Rebuilding the Nation' organized by the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT). Former Chief Justice of India Shri. Dipak Misra, one of the panellists, outlined steps that individuals and the nation can take to adjust to a new post-lockdown world where every citizen can participate in nation building to take the country forward.

Sadhguru spoke about how regulatory institutions can inspire citizens to be more law-abiding. He said citizens must understand that we are not doing this for the nation but for our own wellbeing as a society. If we want to thrive and be successful, the structure of nationhood must be a strong and stable platform. "Without ensuring the national platform is stable and balanced, you're not going to dance," he said adding that whether one is an "intellectual, painter, poet or yogi, you have a responsibility of contributing because nation is providing the platform for you to function."

Responding to a question from Justice P. P. Bhatt, President – ITAT, on how to build ourselves from within, Sadhguru said it was important for us to remember that "wellbeing in this culture" was always defined differently from the West where it has largely come to mean economic prosperity. While that was important and necessary, Sadhguru said in this culture wellbeing means "nutritious food, clean air, pure water to drink, rich soil, a peaceful & joyful mind" and includes other external comforts that

economic prosperity allows. He said affluence does not necessarily translate to wellbeing stating it was very important that “India does not repeat the Western module” of economic development.

PC Mody, Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes, asked Sadhguru how the trust deficit between taxpayers and the government can be addressed. Sadhguru said that this was a challenge because less than 2% of the population with taxable income, pays taxes. “When less than 2% of the population is paying income tax, they will feel their money is not coming back in the form of services,” he said because the other 98% also have to be serviced with tax collected from 2% of the population. He suggested it may be more beneficial to focus on attracting large investment flows into the economy leading to efficient services for all citizens. Tax evaders are celebrated, a legacy left over from the British era, making an “element of criminalization” widespread and accepted in society resulting in further emboldened noncompliance and perpetuating the vicious cycle of trust deficit. Sadhguru had recently interacted with officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and had also exhorted them to build trust between the administrators and the administered to improve efficiency and effectiveness of governance.

In response to a question on how India was faring with the COVID crisis, Sadhguru said considering the density of our population, we have done very well. He made a cautious estimate that if India is out of the woods by mid-September, in “6-9 months” the country could become reasonably successful as an economy if we leveraged opportunities.

Justice P. P. Bhatt opened the session introducing Sadhguru and the panel before inviting former Chief Justice of India Shri. Dipak Misra to make his opening remarks. Other participants in the webinar included PC Mody, Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT); G.S. Pannu, Vice President, ITAT; Dr. Alok Srivastava, IAS Member National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT); Atul Gupta, President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI); Nikita Badheka President All India Federation of Tax Practitioners (AIFTPA); Adish Aggrawala, President, All India Bar Association; and Prashant Maharishi, Accountant Member, ITAT, who facilitated the session.

The panellists explored the role of the Executive and the Judiciary in rebuilding the nation as the country reopens after more than 70 days of lockdown. The session that lasted 90 minutes also examined the role of the judiciary, accounting and taxation systems in building India's image as a safe investment destination. Ever since the lockdown was announced, Sadhguru has interacted with several groups from industry bodies, business leadership and realty to medical professionals, sanitation workers, academicians and celebrities. While the sessions have addressed a range of topics, they have largely centered around the nation's recovery from the pandemic.

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